



“Building Communities Together”

A Networking Tool of HUD's Center for Community and Interfaith Partnerships

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Secretary Hosts Faith and Justice Policy Forum

On November 30, 1999, Secretary Andrew Cuomo hosted a public forum on “The Role of Faith and Justice in Public Policy.”

Secretary Cuomo delivered the keynote speech and urged faith-based organizations (FBOs) to “argue for a seat at the table in the name of justice, not for crumbs in the name of kindness.” “Tension over the role of religion in government is always present when governments enter into partnerships with FBOs, but it’s a resolvable issue,” Secretary Cuomo said. “HUD has a good practical model for partnerships with FBOs. The Department has long history of working with such organizations to provide housing and homeless services to needy individuals,” Cuomo said and that HUD will be doing more to reach out to FBOs.

The Secretary concluded with the following observation. “Almost all religions are built on a common platform. Love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable. It’s a simple truth: Faith and justice are inseparable. The service of faith and promotion of justice are one.”

Other speakers said that an increased role for faith-based organizations in policy-making and social services will generate a greater call for justice in American society. Rev. Jim Wallis said FBOs

shouldn’t join partnerships with government just to make policy implementation more efficient. “FBOs must be messengers of justice, not social service agencies.” Wallis is editor-in-chief of *Sojourners* magazine and a lecturer at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government.

Reverend Dr. Yvonne V. Delk observed that faith-based organizations enter any debate “with a priority for the poor.” The former Executive Director of the Chicago Renewal Society, Delk said “now is the time to bridge the walls that separate us – politics from faith, social from spiritual life. Social transformation will not come without spiritual transformation.”

Rabbi David Saperstein, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, noted that churches and synagogues are already key providers of housing and services to low-income and elderly Americans. When religious non-profits help the homeless, feed the hungry and build homes for the needy, he said, “we are doing what God entrusted us to do.”

Former Kansas City, MO, Mayor Emanuel Cleaver, an ordained Methodist minister, humorously urged the audience “to be good for absolutely nothing” – that is, to do good simply because it’s the right thing to do. He said government and FBOs have a great deal of common ground for future partnerships because “there’s no legitimate faith that doesn’t believe in service.”

The forum drew the largest advance registration - over 800 - of the eight Community 2020 seminars held thus far. You can obtain a transcript at www.hud.gov/2020/2020.html or call 202/708-2404.

A Series of 10 Regional Conferences Continues

The Center for Community and Interfaith Partnerships recently hosted the second in its series of ten regional conferences entitled: “Commitment to Justice: Creative Partnerships for Renewed Hope in Our Communities” on December 8 and 9, 1999 in Nashville, Tennessee.

Keynote speakers included Dr. Forrest E. Harris, Sr., President, American Baptist College; and Dr. John Perkins, Founder and Chairman of the Board, Christian Community Development Association. Each shared his community development experience and encouraged community and faith-based organizations to partner with government to assist those trapped in poverty and to create more just communities. The conference drew over three hundred participants. The feedback on the conferences, both in Nashville and Syracuse (held in October), has been overwhelmingly positive.

The “Commitment to Justice” conferences are designed to highlight resources and successful approaches for developing employment and affordable housing opportunities and to explore ways that grassroots community and faith-based organizations can contribute to greater social, economic, and racial justice in economically distressed areas.

The next conference is slated for January 26-27, 2000 in Houston, Texas. A draft agenda and list of workshops for Houston as well as materials from prior conferences have been posted at www.hud.gov/cdc.html. To obtain more information or to register, call 1-800-308-0395.

What's New in HUD Policy? New Opportunities for Community and Faith-based Non-profits

As part of HUD's ongoing efforts to assist the transition from welfare to work and to promote economic self-sufficiency among residents of public housing, HUD announced the new **Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency (ROSS) Program**, established under the Public Housing Reform Act of 1998. ROSS refines and restructures a combination of three previously funded programs: the Tenant Opportunities (TOP), Economic Development and Supportive Services (EDSS), and Public Housing Service Coordinators programs.

Specifically, ROSS is intended to assist residents in

moving from welfare to work by providing a variety of self-sufficiency opportunities from job training and placement to transportation and child care. In addition, ROSS assists residents in empowerment activities, economic development, and provides resources for supportive services to enhance independent living for elderly and persons with disabilities.

Applicants eligible under ROSS include public housing agencies (PHAs), resident councils, resident organizations, or resident management corporations and non-profit entities supported by residents as well as those non-profits that operate as associations and networks that administer programs benefiting public and assisted housing resident organizations. The addition of nonprofit entities as eligible ap-

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Application materials for the next round of ROSS will be made available with

the next HUD SuperNOFA due for publication in the Federal Register in early 2000.

For more information on the program and how to apply, visit HUD's web site at www.hud.gov/pih/pih.html or call the Public and Indian Housing Information and Resource Center at 1-800-955-2232.

"Building Communities Together" Mission Statement

The Center's Newsletter, "Building Communities Together," seeks to inform our constituency of community and faith-based groups about HUD initiatives and programs that particularly impact and interest them, to enhance the efficacy of these groups by providing educational materials designed to build capacity and facilitate partnerships, and to inspire our constituents to action by lifting up models of successful initiatives and building a sense of community within our constituency.

Center Newsletter Unveils New Format

You may have noticed that this month's issue of "Building Communities Together" looks a bit different. Reflecting on the two years of experience that the Center staff has gained working with the it's constituency of community and faith-based organizations, we have reexamine the purpose and redesigned the format of our newsletter. From now on "Building Communities Together" will include a selection of the following regular features:

- *News from the Center*: Highlighting Center initiatives, events, and conferences.
- *What's New in HUD Policy*: Describing new developments in HUD programs and policies that are of particular interest to community and faith-based organizations.
- *Center Toolbox*: Designed to provide technical assistance and capacity building resources for our constituents.
- *News from the Field*: Highlighting innovations, best practices, and interesting ideas being tested in the field.

Each month, one of the features will be in the format of an interview with a leading practitioner in the field of community and economic development in order to share the experience and insights that he or she has gained with our other constituents.

We hope you enjoy our new format and find it useful. We welcome your comments and suggestions for future stories through our website at www.hud.gov or by fax at 202/708-1160.

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The Center Celebrates its 2nd Year: An Interview with Fr. Joseph Hacala, S.J.

In November, the Center, created by Secretary Cuomo in 1997, celebrated its second anniversary. The Center strives to fulfill its mission to focus HUD's involvement with community and faith-based organizations (FBOs) by serving as: (1) an information clearinghouse; (2) a troubleshooter; (3) and a policy advocate within HUD.

When Secretary Cuomo announced the founding of the Center, he expressed his hope that "By joining forces with those organizations whose work brings them closest to the needs of the poor and powerless, we can do our part to spur a grass roots movement across the country to ensure that people and communities in need are better represented and better served."

Fr. Joseph Hacala, S.J., Director of the Center, takes the opportunity of the Center's second anniversary to reflect on his experience in this interview.

Q. Has the Center lived up to the ambitious objectives you and Secretary Cuomo outlined two years ago?

A. Yes, most definitely. The Center, through its own initiatives like the regional conference series, and by playing a key role in HUD-wide initiatives like the Appalachian Summit and new markets (Pine Ridge), has become an active presence in the community development arena - listening, educating, coordinating, and partnering. The Center furthers its mission of focusing, integrating and intensifying HUD's involvement with community and faith-based organizations every time we organize and sponsor a conference, every time a member of our staff attends an event as a keynote speaker or panelist, and every day as we respond to the growing volume of constituent inquiries and requests for information.

In fact, I believe that in many ways we have exceeded our expectations. Two years ago I don't think any of us foresaw how "hot" an issue faith-based community development would become. Because the center is already established, we are well positioned to take advantage of the heightened level of interest generated by the presidential candidates and the "Charitable Choice" pro-

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Secretary Andrew Cuomo

vision of the welfare reform legislation. As a result, the Center's profile is growing to heights that I never imagined.

Q. In what ways have the Center's activities intensified the relationship between community and faith-based organizations and HUD?

A. The Center works hard to reach out to inexperienced faith and community-based organizations that have not previously partnered with HUD, to educate them about available resource and to advise them on how to build capacity. New grant applications from these groups enhance the level of competition for HUD funds, produce innovative approaches, and generally improve the quality of services provided.

Moreover, because faith and community-based organizations are uniquely po-

sitioned to address issues of NIMBYism and to provide affordable housing, the Center is proactively working to engage these groups in initiatives that will enhance existing HUD programs.

To give just one example, the Center is working with a number of faith-based intermediaries and technical assistance providers - like the Congress of National Black Churches and I CAN! America - on a campaign to involve congregations and FBOs in an effort to make Section 8 vouchers more effective by encouraging more landlords throughout entire metropolitan regions to accept the vouchers.

Q. Of which Center-sponsored events or initiatives are you most proud?

A. It's a tough choice between the Community 2020 event that the Center recently sponsored on "The Role of Faith & Justice in Public Policy" and the regional conference series, but the reason why I am proud of each is the same. Each of these events has demonstrated the tremendous, and occasionally untapped energy, that exists among community and faith-based organizations out in the field. All of the HUD staff from Headquarters, the various program units, and field offices who have attended these events have been struck by the motivation and commitment of these groups to overcoming the challenges to creating social, economic, and racial justice in our nation's communities. Having witnessed and experienced this energy firsthand, Secretary Cuomo and other HUD staff have been actively considering ways in which HUD can better serve the needs of and partner with community and faith-based organizations.



Center Toolbox: Legal Opinion on Church/State Issues and HUD Programs

The Faith Community has long been one of the leaders in assisting homeless persons and families and in providing affordable housing for poor people, especially special populations like the elderly and disabled. HUD is proud to be a partner in making assistance available for these purposes. But special consideration attends participation by the Faith Community.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment or religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." These two purposeful provisions — the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause — may sometimes seem in tension. Working them out requires careful, principled commitment. For purposes of the role of the Faith Community in HUD assistance programs, the Establishment Clause is generally the requirement that must be addressed.

The United States Supreme Court has consistently pointed to three principles in carrying out the Establishment Clause. First, government assistance may not be used for religious purposes. Second, the use of government aid cannot advance or inhibit religion in its principal or primary effect. Third, in assuring that these two principles are carried out, there cannot be such an entanglement that government cannot extricate itself from the process. Although in recent years some members of the Supreme Court have focused on particular aspects of Church/State separation, such

as whether the action under review "endorses" religion, the three principles described above remain the controlling law.

The stretching point is invariably the second principle and making sure that government assistance does not advance religion. HUD has long taken the position that in the case of services and food provided to the homeless and other poor people **through** religious organizations, the true beneficiary is the ultimate recipient. Therefore, a church carrying out such services is not the beneficiary and there is no bar to awarding the assistance to and through what the Supreme Court calls a "pervasively sectarian organization," like a church. (HUD regulations refer to such organizations as "primarily religious entities" or "primarily religious organizations".)

When HUD implemented this "true beneficiary" theory, it included language by which providers agree not to discriminate on the basis of religion in hiring or in the provision of services, and not to proselytize. That language was suggested by a law firm serving as counsel to the headquarters operations of a national church.

The issue of government aid is more complicated when the assistance is used to improve a structure owned by a religious organization. There, the church is receiving a benefit, namely, the improvement of its real property. This is a concern, for example, in the section 202 and section 811 programs of housing assistance for the elderly and the disabled, respectively. To avoid the Church/State problem, nonprofit organizations sponsored by churches develop and operate the project. With respect to the homeless and community development block grant (CDBG) programs, HUD designed a lease mechanism to facilitate rehabilitation of church-owned property for HUD program uses. Under this approach, the nonprofit organization leases the structure, or a portion of the structure, from the church and can even con-

tract out with the church to administer the secular activities, such as homeless services or other public services. Sometimes it may not be in the economic interests of a religious organization to establish, or otherwise utilize, a nonprofit entity. But when large grants are available and there is a need to follow these requirements, there has been successful partnership between HUD and religious providers.

For some other entities, over a 20-year period HUD has made determinations that several organizations should not be considered "pervasively sectarian organizations." Examples include the YMCA and the YWCA. In cases like these, the entity may receive HUD assistance directly for both services and property improvement. Of course, as in all cases, the HUD grant cannot be used for religious purposes.

As indicated above, the other side of the religious component of the First Amendment is the Free Exercise Clause. HUD is sensitive to this branch of the law. One way HUD helps in this respect relates to issues concerning the occasional and incidental use of community space for religious purposes in federally assisted public housing and section 202 and 811 projects for the elderly and disabled. The general HUD policy is that community space may be made available for purposes of interest to residents, including religious purposes, so long as the space is made available to all residents in the same manner.

HUD looks forward to continuing the shared mission of both government and the churches to lessen the hurt of poverty and homelessness and to move toward eradicating them.

Information on regulations directly related to Church/State issues in HUD programs are available at our website at www.hud.gov or by contacting our office at 202/708-2404.